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Monday, September 17, 1973

A LETTER FROM DR. SAKHAROV

Remarks by Senator Henry M. Jackson  
on Detente and Freedom of Emigration

Senate Floor  
Monday, September 17, 1973

Mr. President, every year the Congress receives, from individuals and organizations, hundreds of open letters on every conceivable sort of issue. But never in the more than 30 years that I have served in the House and Senate have I seen an open letter that so deeply challenges the conscience of the Congress, or so profoundly appeals to the spirit of the American people, as the brave letter released in Moscow Saturday by Andrei Sakharov.

Sakharov, who is known throughout the world for his great achievements as a scientist, including his central role in the development of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, has, at great personal risk, established himself as the principal spokesman both for civil rights in the Soviet Union, and an international detente based upon the development of human rights. For his courage, his eloquence and his wisdom he has earned the admiration and respect of men throughout the world who are dedicated both to individual liberty and to the sort of stable international society that can only result from a lowering of the barriers to the free movement of men and ideas. For his heroic refusal to be silent in the face of threats and intimidation, Sakharov has earned the bitter wrath and coercion of the Soviet state

that once conferred upon him its highest awards -- and that now seeks to isolate him from his own people and to silence his call for peace based on a vision of human rights.

I know I speak for millions of Americans in deploring the failure of the highest officials of this Administration to speak out on behalf of Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in support of the view of these distinguished Russian citizens that any genuine detente must be based on human rights. HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger's outrageous criticism of the President of the National Academy of Sciences for his defense of Sakharov disgraces the American tradition of speaking out on behalf of individual liberty. To Weinberger, who condones Soviet repression on the grounds that scientific exchange with the Soviets benefits mankind, I say this: mankind will never truly benefit from scientific exchange that takes place in the shadow of official persecution of great men of science. Instead of condemning the American scientific community Secretary Weinberger should condemn the Soviets' 20th century inquisition directed against free thought and expression.

It is a sorry indication of how easily the highest officials of the Administration would betray the principles on which this great nation is founded when the Secretary of State-designate has indicated his practical indifference to the appeals of Soviet intellectuals who know that progress in the area of human rights must be a condition of economic and political concessions to the Soviet Union. A failure to insist upon progress in the area of human rights in the context of the developing detente is a betrayal of our own highest values. It also ignores the requirements for a more peaceful world. The confidence which we can have in the commitment of the Soviet Union to a genuine era of peaceful East-West relations can best be measured by the willingness of the Soviet authorities to accept an increasing measure of individual freedom in the East. Therefore, until we see signs of genuine change in Soviet policy on human rights, we will

never know whether the "relaxation of tensions" is tactical and ephemeral, or whether it is basic and likely to endure. Now, at the beginning of the road to detente, is the time to test the direction we are asked to travel. For as Sakharov has said:

"For decades the Soviet Union has been developing under conditions of an intolerable isolation, bringing with it the ugliest consequences. Even a partial preservation of those conditions would be highly perilous for all mankind, for international confidence and detente.

"In view of the foregoing, I am appealing to the Congress of the United States to give its support to the Jackson Amendment, which represents in my view and in the view of its sponsors an attempt to protect the right of emigration of citizens in countries that are entering into new and friendlier relations with the United States.

"The Jackson Amendment is made even more significant by the fact that the world is only just entering on a new course of detente and it is therefore essential that the proper direction be followed from the outset. This is a fundamental issue, extending far beyond the question of emigration."

I have been dismayed to learn, Mr. President, that a high American official, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for East-West Trade, recently sent an intermediary to meet with a group of Russian Jews -- brave men who have been waging an heroic struggle for the right to emigrate freely -- to advise them to lobby American citizens against my amendment to the trade bill that would make trade concessions to the Soviet Union contingent on free emigration. But what is perhaps most shameful is the indication, in a statement by twelve Jewish scientists in Moscow, that this American official warned that the Soviet government would "wreak vengeance" on its Jewish citizens and that "no one would be able to come to their aid" if the Jackson Amendment were to be approved by the Congress.

In contrast to the ugly spectacle of a high Administration official conveying a Soviet warning of reprisals, there is this response from the brave Jews of the Soviet Union: "Apprehension for our future fate must not become a... pretext to abandon the fight for our human rights."

And, of course, as Sakharov well understands, the Jackson Amendment and the struggle for free emigration extend to citizens in the Soviet Union, Jews and

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non-Jews alike, who, in Sakharov's words:

"want to leave the country and who have been seeking to exercise that right for years and for decades at the cost of endless difficulty and humiliation."

Mr. President, Andrei Sakharov, in his open letter to us, has courageously and eloquently urged that the Congress agree to my amendment to the trade bill and to its companion measure, the Mills-Vanik provision in the House. It is ironic that Sakharov's forceful argument should come to us at a moment when the trade bill is before the House Committee on Ways and Means and when there is a move underway -- which I am certain will not succeed -- to kill the Mills-Vanik measure by a hastily drafted Administration-backed Corman-Pettis alternative that would disappoint the hopes of thousands of people to whom we are trying to help bring just a little bit of freedom. I am confident that the House of Representatives, and the eighteen cosponsors of the Mills-Vanik amendment on the Ways and Means Committee, will reject this or any such maneuver and keep their promise to those innocent men and women who desire only to emigrate to the free world.

Withholding most-favored-nation treatment and subsidized credits from non-market countries until they implement the right to emigrate is the most effective action the Congress can take in the area of human rights. The Mills-Vanik amendment in the House and the Jackson Amendment in the Senate do just that. As a nation of immigrants, we can do no less.

Mr. President, Andrei Sakharov, by speaking out at this moment when both he himself and the movement for human rights in the Soviet Union are gravely threatened by the full power of the Soviet state, has challenged each of us to higher levels of conscience and responsibility. Let me conclude with his words -- and with my affirmation that we shall meet our responsibilities before history:

"The abandonment of a policy of principle would be a betrayal of the thousands of Jews and non-Jews who want to emigrate, of the hundreds in camps and mental hospitals, of the victims of the Berlin Wall.

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Such a denial would lead to stronger repressions on ideological grounds. It would be tantamount to total capitulation

of democratic principles in face of blackmail, deceit and violence. The consequences of such a capitulation for international confidence, detente and the entire future of mankind are difficult to predict.

"I express the hope that the Congress of the United States, reflecting the will and the traditional love of freedom of the American people, will realize its historical responsibility before mankind and will find the strength to rise above temporary partisan considerations of commercialism and prestige.

"I hope that the Congress will support the Jackson Amendment."

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(The full text of Dr. Sakharov's letter to the Congress is attached.)

OPEN LETTER TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

from

ANDREI SAKHAROV

Moscow, September 14, 1973

At a time when the Congress is debating fundamental issues of foreign policy, I consider it my duty to express my view on one such issue -- protection of the right to freedom of residence within the country of one's choice. That right was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948 in the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

If every nation is entitled to choose the political system under which it wishes to live, this is true all the more of every individual person. A country whose citizens are deprived of this minimal right is not free even if there were not a single citizen who would want to exercise that right.

But, as you know, there are tens of thousands of citizens in the Soviet Union -- Jews, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Armenians, Estonians, Latvians, Turks and members of other ethnic groups -- who want to leave the country and who have been seeking to exercise that right for years and for decades at the cost of endless difficulty and humiliation.

You know that prisons, labor camps and mental hospitals are full of people who have sought to exercise this legitimate right.

You surely know the name of the Lithuanian, Simas A. Kudirka, who was handed over to the Soviet authorities by an American vessel, as well as the names of the defendants in the tragic 1970 hijacking trial in Leningrad. You know about the victims of the Berlin Wall.

There are many more lesser known victims. Remember them, too!

For decades the Soviet Union has been developing under conditions of an intolerable isolation, bringing with it the ugliest consequences. Even a partial preservation of those conditions would be highly perilous for all mankind, for international confidence and detente.

In view of the foregoing, I am appealing to the Congress of the United States to give its support to the Jackson Amendment, which represents in my view and in the view of its sponsors an attempt to protect the right of emigration of citizens in countries that are entering into new and friendlier relations with the United States.

The Jackson Amendment is made even more significant by the fact that the world is only just entering on a new course of detente and it is therefore essential that the proper direction be followed from the outset. This is a fundamental issue, extending far beyond the question of emigration.

Those who believe that the Jackson Amendment is likely to undermine anyone's personal or governmental prestige are wrong. Its provisions are minimal and not demeaning.

It should be no surprise that the democratic process can add its corrective to the actions of public figures who negotiate without admitting the possibility of such an amendment. The amendment does not represent interference in the internal affairs of socialist countries, but simply a defense of international law, without which there can be no mutual trust.

Adoption of the amendment therefore cannot be a threat to Soviet-American relations. All the more, it would not imperil international detente.

There is a particular silliness in objections to the amendment that are founded on the alleged fear that its adoption would lead to outbursts of anti-semitism in the U.S.S.R. and hinder the emigration of Jews.

Here you have total confusion, either deliberate or based on ignorance about the U.S.S.R. It is as if the emigration issue affected only Jews. As if the situation of those Jews who have vainly sought to emigrate to Israel was not already tragic enough and would become even more hopeless if it were to depend on the democratic attitudes and on the humanity of OVIR [the Soviet visa agency]. As if the techniques of "quiet diplomacy" could help anyone, beyond a few individuals in Moscow and some other cities.

The abandonment of a policy of principle would be a betrayal of the thousands of Jews and non-Jews who want to emigrate, of the hundreds in camps and mental hospitals, of the victims of the Berlin Wall.

Such a denial would lead to stronger repressions on ideological grounds. It would be tantamount to total capitulation of democratic principles in face of blackmail, deceit and violence. The consequences of such a capitulation for international confidence, detente and the entire future of mankind are difficult to predict.

I express the hope that the Congress of the United States, reflecting the will and the traditional love of freedom of the American people, will realize its historical responsibility before mankind and will find the strength to rise above temporary partisan considerations of commercialism and prestige.

I hope that the Congress will support the Jackson Amendment.

September 14, 1973

(signed) A. SAKHAROV

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